

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, Republicans continue to work on what we call the BEST agenda: B for balancing the budget and paying down the debt, E for excellence in education, S for saving social security and Medicare, and T for lowering taxes on the middle class working families in America.

Let me talk a little bit about E for education. When I was in 11th grade back at Clark Central High School in Athens, Georgia, I had a wonderful teacher, Mrs. Musik. Now Mrs. Musik was tough. You could not split an infinitive, you could not dangle a participle in her class. She expected you to learn grammar. She expected you to read Emerson and Thoreau.

But she was the master. When she went in there, she did not have to answer to the Board of Education in Atlanta or the folks in Washington, the bureaucrats who want to run the classroom today. She was in charge.

That is what we want in the Republican Party, local control of education: letting the teacher run the classroom, not the Washington bureaucrats.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

(Mr. SHOWS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, more than 400,000 elderly Mississippians depend on Medicare for their health care. In my home district in Mississippi, the Fourth District, close to 93,000 elderly people depend on Medicare. Without the Medicare system, many people in Mississippi and across the country would have to live without health care.

Right now we have the opportunity to protect both social security and Medicare by reserving nearly 80 percent of the budget surplus to ensure the solvency of social security through 2055 and Medicare through 2020.

Look to the fact that prior to Medicare's introduction in the early sixties, 55 percent of Americans who reached the age of retirement lived in poverty. That number is less than 10 percent today. That decline can be attributed to the success of the Medicare system.

We cannot leave Medicare out in the cold, this valuable program which is so special, in order to offer a massive tax cut. We should take the opportunity to protect social security and Medicare, and offer the targeted tax cuts to working families who need them.

#### CONGRESS IS WAITING FOR THE PRESIDENT'S SOCIAL SECURITY PROPOSAL

(Mr. SCHAFFER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, the President has been talking about the need to save social security for a num-

ber of weeks now, but the talk has not advanced beyond general talking points and rough outlines. That is fine for television and for public relations, but Congress needs a proposal.

We have heard over and over again that the White House is ready to work with Congress in a bipartisan manner to reform social security, but we are waiting. We have not seen any legislation or even a sign of legislation coming.

Rhetoric is great, but now is the time to get to work. Congress has even set aside an honored spot for the President's social security bill, H.R. 1. Congress will immediately get to work on this bill as soon as it arrives.

It is time for the President to answer some questions about his social security proposal, particularly questions about the double-counting of imaginary money that it contains, double-counting that adds up to more than \$2 trillion. H.R. 1 is a starting point. Now let us get started.

#### MEDICARE, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND PAYING DOWN OUR DEBT

(Mr. GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Medicare and social security are two of the greatest programs for our citizens. They provide the two fundamental keys to retirement security, medical and financial security.

Before this Congress spends the budget surplus either on tax cuts or anything else, we have a responsibility to every American, past, present, and the future, to save these two American treasures, and also to pay off at least some of our national debt.

The bad news will only come if people try to make these programs more political or, worse yet, to dismantle social security and Medicare. Retirement security and senior health care are popular with the American people for a simple reason, because they work, and they have worked for many years, and paying down the national debt just make common sense.

#### PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. CROWLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I believe there is no greater issue that confronts this Congress and the Nation than health care reform. This is not a Democratic issue, this is not a Republican issue, but rather, a matter whose urgency and scope should unite all of us in a bipartisan effort to ensure that each and every American can obtain affordable coverage to meet their health care needs.

This is why I am pleased to join the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) and my colleagues as an original

cosponsor of the Patients' Bill of Rights. Mr. Speaker, my constituents, the hardworking people of Queens and the Bronx, strongly support the enactment of comprehensive health care legislation, as the vast majority of them are in favor of the Patients' Bill of Rights.

We must pass legislation that guarantees access to specialized care, common sense emergency room treatment, and the ability of women to have direct access to OB-GYN care. We as a Congress must protect the millions of Americans who are in managed care programs, and provide them with the highest quality of health care possible.

#### ENCOURAGING THE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP TO JOIN DEMOCRATS IN MAKING DEBT REDUCTION A PRIORITY

(Mr. GONZALEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to encourage the Republican leadership to join my colleagues in making debt reduction a priority. My Democratic colleagues have made a commitment to dedicate the surplus to saving social security and Medicare and paying down the debt. This is the fiscally responsible decision to be made.

For the first time in a generation we will have a surplus. We are finally in the black. Just because we have some money on the positive side of the ledger, we cannot let spending fever grip Congress. I know my colleagues on the other side of this aisles want to dole out tax cuts, but now is not the time. While across-the-board tax cuts may sound attractive, it is not the most opportune time to indulge. The truth is that such a tax cut will only benefit the most affluent Americans.

We must practice fiscal responsibility and restraint. If we dedicate the surplus to paying down the debt, we can put money in the pockets of hardworking families. What I mean by that is that we can reduce the debt from \$3.7 trillion to \$1.3 trillion. Such a reduction will have a ripple effect on our economy. All Americans stand to gain. Economists believe that this kind of reduction would result in lower interest rates.

#### THE 1999 TRADE POLICY AGENDA AND THE 1998 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TRADE AGREEMENTS PROGRAM—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE) laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Ways and Means and ordered to be printed: